

Connecticut State Board of Education
Hartford

Position Statement on Student Support Services

April 7, 2010

The Connecticut State Board of Education believes that implementation of a comprehensive program of school-based support services will help students to become self-sufficient, healthy and productive adults. Many students face challenges that place them at risk for educational failure, including poverty, family dysfunction, emotional trauma, linguistic differences and community violence. By adopting a preventive, whole-child perspective and providing a wide range of interventions, schools will be better equipped to reduce barriers to learning and enhance healthy development. Studies have shown that schools with a continuum of developmental, preventive, remedial and support services enhance the capacity of all students to achieve academic success and personal well-being.

Need for Student Support Services

Disciplines providing support services include school counseling, school nursing, school psychology, school social work, speech-language pathology and audiology. These services assist the student population, parents and the entire school community in establishing a full range of prevention and intervention systems that promote healthy development, provide early intervention to address problems as soon after onset as possible and assist with chronic and severe problems. To address students' emotional, behavioral, and mental and physical health needs, the Board recommends that every school district develop, adopt and implement a collaborative approach to service delivery that involves effective use of student support services personnel, parental involvement and community-based resources.

Benefit to Students

Student support services specialists: (1) help educators, administrators, other staff members and parents understand and respond effectively to the health and social factors that affect students' learning; (2) identify risk factors, such as physical deficiencies, communication disorders or emotional challenges that impede learning; and (3) provide prevention and intervention strategies. Often, these interventions are described in students' individualized plans, such as their individualized health care plans, individualized education programs (IEPs) and student success plans. Districts must employ appropriately qualified student support services specialists to provide the requisite evaluations and interventions for students with special needs.

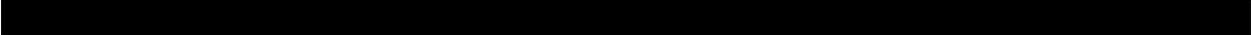
The Board believes that the use of scientific, research-based interventions benefits the entire student body by providing clear standards and replicable results. Therefore, it is critical that student support services staff members utilize approaches wherein data collection and analysis are important components in determining efficacy of support services. Offering a streamlined system for delivery of services requires student support services personnel to work within school teams (e.g., data, child study, student support) to examine health and behavioral health trends and respond by developing priorities and strategies to address the needs of students and families.



Benefit to Families and the Community

The Board recognizes that the home and community are critical environments that influence students' well-being and educational progress. The involvement of family members should be a primary component in the delivery of services. In partnership with teachers, administrators and other school staff, student support services specialists build connections between home and school, especially when parents need help in understanding their children's educational needs and their own role in encouraging learning. These professionals maintain open lines of communication while they interpret school requirements and assist families in expressing their concerns. Student support services specialists understand the community and its impact on the lives of students and families and can link the home and school to community resources, expedite appropriate referrals and facilitate communication among home, school and community services.

Guidance for school-based student support services that foster prevention and intervention systems is outlined in the corresponding document.



Policy Guidance for Position Statement on Student Support Services

April 7, 2010

The Connecticut State Board of Education, in its 2010 *Position Statement on Student Support Services*, calls for every school district to develop a full range of school-based support services that foster prevention and intervention systems addressing health and social factors for student success. The Board offers the following guidance to support the implementation of Student Support Services.

State Department of Education Responsibilities

Provide leadership informed by science-based guidelines.

- Use data collection to increase the fidelity of interventions used by student support services staff to address existing and emerging needs among children and youth.
- Advocate on state and federal levels for expanded student support services addressing the physical, developmental, psychological and social-emotional needs of students.
- Promote best practices by issuing state summaries of district efforts resulting in significant or promising results.

Provide training, technical assistance and resources.

- Encourage professional development of student support services staff through discipline-specific training and technical assistance.
- Provide technical support and training to school district staff on data-driven decision making, recordkeeping and referral processes.
- Maintain and publish information related to the physical, communication, psychological and social-emotional development of children and youth.

Develop and maintain partnerships.

- Develop and strengthen relationships between student support services staff and community organizations to address preventive, whole-child directed activities.

School Districts' Responsibilities

Student support personnel frequently provide services in more than one school within a district. Consistent application of district-level policies across all schools will ensure uniform and equitable delivery of student support services.

Develop and implement policies and practices that consistently promote delivery of meaningful and responsive student support services.

- Implement prevention-oriented programs and services promoting a positive school climate in which individuals feel connected, safe and supported.
- Develop strategies effective in reducing the prevalence of risk behaviors such as alcohol, tobacco and other drug use, sexual activity, violence, truancy and school avoidance.
- Implement a comprehensive prekindergarten through Grade 12 life skills curriculum that delineates goals and competencies in the areas of personal, social, career and academic development, and prepares students for success in school, at work, in the community and in personal relationships.
- Support the implementation of integrated support services in all schools including student success plans addressing the academic, career, and social-emotional and physical and communicative wellness and capacity of students.
- Implement special education related services consistent with each student's individualized education program.

- Utilize a continuum of interventions and strategies addressing the management of behavioral problems using the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) *Guidelines for In-school and Out-of-school Suspensions*.
- Expand coordination and collaboration among staff providing regular education and special education services through scientific, research-based interventions and tiered supports addressing primary, secondary and tertiary efforts.

Provide ongoing professional development for staff.

- Provide for discipline-specific staff development that ensures ongoing skill development for student support services staff.
- Provide continuing education for all school professionals on collaborative models of service delivery to prepare them to recognize and appropriately support students at risk for educational or social failure.
- Provide and encourage use of culturally competent curricula and practices.
- Use student support services staff to provide staff training around issues of student development, typical developmental milestones, identifying at-risk characteristics and appropriate referral for student needs.

Regularly communicate with students, families, staff and community partners.

- Engage parents, youth and community members in identifying community-specific risk behaviors and supporting effective strategies to target such concerns.
- Develop whole-school and classroom-based positive behavioral supports that encourage appropriate role modeling among adults; responsibility, initiative and integrity among students; and an atmosphere of mutual respect and consideration for one another.
- Arrange home visits or alternate means of communicating with those families unable to meet at school.
- Use culturally responsive language that respects families, cultures, backgrounds and strengths.

Develop and maintain partnerships.

- Establish school-based and districtwide teams to assess the health and mental health needs of the school community and coordinate the delivery of an array of services that includes prevention, early intervention and crisis response. These teams should include student support specialists, school administrators and representatives of community agencies, e.g., police, Department of Children and Families, and health and mental health care providers. The CSDE *Guidelines for a Coordinated Approach to School Health, 2007*, provides recommendations to address the physical, social and emotional health needs of the school community.
- Use Memoranda of Understanding to establish agreements with community agencies that identify and streamline mechanisms for student referrals to external support services.

Regularly evaluate progress and revise policies and programs as needed.

- Adopt discipline-specific criteria for evaluating support services specialists, using the competencies and indicators developed by the CSDE.
- Evaluate current service models and specific interventions to standardize successful service delivery throughout the district.

Student Support Services Staff Responsibilities

Regularly evaluate progress and revise practices and interventions as needed.

- Develop recordkeeping that supports consistent service delivery and is compliant with federal, state, and district policies on records management.
- Maintain appropriate outcome-based data to support the effectiveness of interventions used with students.
- Use tiered approaches that increase the focus and intensity of interventions when a student fails to respond as needed.

- Engage in evidence-based prevention and intervention activities that can be generalized, as appropriate, to the whole student population.
- Analyze existing research to identify best practices in the provision of student support services and design evaluation studies to assess effectiveness of district programs and services.

Communicate positive and accurate messages to students and families that reinforce positive family engagement.

- Engage parents as partners in meeting the needs of individual students and the student body as a whole, e.g., demonstrate commitment to families and expect and support all staff in creating a respectful, inclusive and family-friendly environment.
- Avoid educational jargon when communicating with parents and provide opportunities for two-way communication focused on student learning and success.
- Engage students as partners in advocating for their own individual needs, including participation in the development of their academic, social-emotional, physical, communication and career goals.

Collaborate with professional colleagues in developing and implementing services.

- Participate in regular education intervention teams (e.g., early intervention team, student assistance team and school-based data team), providing professional consultation and support to both school staff and parents.
- Engage in ongoing supervision as one component of professional development.
- Provide classroom observation and consultation to school staff to facilitate delivery of appropriate supports in the students' school environment.

Provide appropriate role modeling for students.

- Model prosocial behaviors and provide daily reinforcement of classroom lessons and school climate priorities, e.g., encourage caring behavior toward others, allow for and encourage shared responsibility for tasks, and exhibit problem solving and conflict resolution skills

Students' Responsibilities (as developmentally appropriate)

Take responsibility for personal growth and healthy decisions.

- Share goals, interests, concerns and fears with a trusted adult, e.g., student support services specialist, parent and teacher.
- Develop academic and adaptive skills to promote positive career and social-emotional development.
- Recognize and exercise student rights and responsibilities by engaging in activities that develop critical thinking, problem solving and conflict resolution skills.
- Participate in activities that promote positive youth development and schoolwide positive behavioral supports, e.g., engage in learning as a participant rather than a recipient, provide feedback to others in constructive ways, explore and reflect on personal values, interests and strengths, and develop and practice skills for success in academic and social achievements.
- Participate as a partner in personal academic, social-emotional, physical, communication and career goals.
- Ask questions, become familiar with the goals and objectives of the educational plan and read the student handbook on an annual basis.

Be respectful of the strengths and differences of others.

- Respect and appreciate diversity in others and model prosocial behaviors.
- Be aware of relevant policies addressing student responsibilities and behaviors.
- Become familiar with the school's culture and environment by participating in school functions and extracurricular activities of interest.

Use student support services appropriately.

- Learn how to access needed services and who the student support services staff members are in the school, e.g., school nurse, school psychologist, school social worker, school counselor and speech language pathologist.
- Practice lessons provided by teachers, student support services specialists and parents.

Families' Responsibilities

Create a home environment that supports all aspects of a student's education.

- Provide a positive home environment that facilitates optimal growth and development by modeling prosocial behaviors and providing support for learning at home and in the community.
- Talk to children about school and help them think about and plan for their future.

Build a relationship with teachers to support children's health and well-being.

- Share values and expectations for student achievement and school success through regular contact with the child's teachers and student support services personnel.
- Monitor children's academic and social-emotional progress through participation in multidisciplinary teams when appropriate, e.g., child study team, planning and placement team and student assistance team.
- Assist in developing children's educational plan, e.g., student success plan, individualized education program (IEP) and transition plan, as appropriate.
- Become familiar with the school by participating as a partner in school committees, in the development of schoolwide positive behavior supports and school improvement planning.

Participate in school efforts supporting a safe, healthy and developmentally appropriate environment at school.

- Participate in school-sponsored learning opportunities and review school communications such as the school Web site and newsletters.
- Be aware of relevant policies addressing student responsibilities and behaviors.
- Participate in school functions and extracurricular activities.

Communities' Responsibilities

Work with school districts to support and promote students' social and emotional development.

- Use Memoranda of Understanding to establish agreements with local schools that identify and streamline the mechanisms for student referral to social service agencies.
- Develop and strengthen relationships between student support services staff and their counterparts in the community to address preventive, whole-child directed activities.
- Assemble, archive and broadly disseminate information related to the physical, psychological and social-emotional development of children and youth.
- Provide staff to attend and participate in interagency meetings to address local youth risk factors, strengths and needs, and develop systematic responses regarding these issues.
- Ensure that community agencies use evidence-based interventions to address current and emerging needs in the community.
- Invite appropriate school personnel to participate in staff development opportunities in the community.

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